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ABSTRACT

As part of an effort to learn from reflecting on personal history and autobiographical writing and analysis, this paper shares one teacher educator's experiences in learning to teach. The process of learning to teach a field experience course for elementary school teacher candidates at a teachers' junior college in Taiwan is described. The evolution of thoughts and experience in the process of preparing to teach the course and what to teach in the course are traced. It is acknowledged that personal background and interpretations of experience, collegial collaboration, formal scholarship in education, official documents, and practical wisdom all play an important role in shaping learning. Learning from students while conducting the course is highlighted. Considered to be an important and valuable component in preservice teacher programs in both the United States and Taiwan, field experience is organized and taught in Taiwan in ways that are significantly different from the way it is taught in most American teacher education programs. It is hoped that the thoughts and experience shared in this paper would be of interest and use to teachers in the United States and elsewhere. (LL)

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Li-Wei Wang

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LEARNING TO TEACH THE ELEMENTARY FIELD EXPERIENCE COURSE AT A TEACHERS' JUNIOR COLLEGE IN TAIWAN

Li-Wei Wang

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Abstract

The importance of personal history in influencing teacher learning and the value of autobiography writing and analysis in facilitating teacher learning have more often been acknowledged in recent years. As part of an effort to learn from reflecting on his own personal history and from autobiography writing and analysis, the author shares a significant segment of how he learned to teach and became a teacher and a teacher educator. He reflects on how he has learned to teach and what he has learned to teach in the field experience course in the elementary teacher preparation program in Taiwan through preparing for and teaching it. He traces the evolution of his thoughts and experience in the process of preparing for and teaching the course and identifies two major dimensions of consideration during the process: how to teach the course and what to teach in the course. He acknowledges that personal background and interpretations of experience, collegial collaboration, formal scholarship in education, official documents, and practical wisdom have all played an important part in shaping his learning in various aspects. In addition, he highlights his learning with and from his students in conducting this course as one of the most significant parts of his learning. Labor-intensive and time consuming as it is, he has found the task of reviewing and reflecting on personal history rewarding as each time he tries to reflect on the experience systematically he learns something new. Considered to be an important and valuable component in preservice teacher education programs in both the United States and in Taiwan, field experience is organized and taught in Taiwan in ways that are significantly different from the way it is taught in most American teacher education programs. The author hopes that the thoughts and experience he shares in this paper would be of interest and use to his colleagues in the United States and elsewhere.

LEARNING TO TEACH THE ELEMENTARY FIELD EXPERIENCE COURSE AT A TEACHERS' JUNIOR COLLEGE IN TAIWAN[1]

Li-Wei Wang[2]

This paper is part of an effort to compose my pedagogical autobiography. It deals with a small but significant segment of my learning to teach and to become a teacher and a teacher educator. The segment is about the process in which I learned to teach the field experience course for elementary school teacher candidates at a teachers' junior college in Taiwan.

I choose to write about this segment for several reasons. First, since it is a fairly recent experience, it is better remembered, and it is easier to see how my earlier experiences and personal history influenced my learning, thinking, and doing at the time. Secondly, it is a relatively small and focused piece of experience in professional learning and practice; therefore it is more manageable, given the time limit and length of the paper. Thirdly, it is a very important professional learning and working experience for me. I have invested more time and energy (and in return have learned more) in teaching this course than in any other course I have taught and studied. And it is through teaching this course that I decided to devote myself (maybe for the rest of my life) to studying how teachers think, feel, learn and grow and to helping them to achieve optimal learning and growth—which formed my dissertation topic in Taiwan (on teacher stress and burnout) and lead me to be here today.

Fourthly, field experience is generally viewed as the single most important learning experience in teacher preparation (Kennedy, 1991). Learning how to help teacher candidates, teachers, and teacher educators get the most (in amount and in its educative potential) out of this component in an educative manner is in and of itself valuable. So maybe documenting what I learned from and through teaching this course and how I learned them would provide some useful information for others. And finally, because, as far as I know, field experience courses in most American teacher preparation programs are organized and taught quite differently from those of ours, sharing some of my experiences, thinking, and learning in this area may be of interest to you and to other American teacher educators and may also stimulate some interesting insights in, from, and for all of us.

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[1]This paper was taken from the author's pedagogical autobiography originally written for the course "Teacher as Learner." The author would like to thank Dr. Sharon Feiman-Nemser for her teaching, support, and encouragement. The author would also like to thank all his teachers, colleagues, and students who inspired his thinking and helped with his work on teacher learning and learning to teach.

[2]Li-Wei Wang, instructor of elementary education at National Taitung Teachers' College, Taiwan, Republic of China, is a doctoral candidate in the College of Education, Michigan State University.

In writing this paper, I have tried to make my narration as descriptive as possible and to be truthful to what happened. However, several things may have influenced the accuracy of my descriptions. First of all, the descriptions presented here rely mainly on my memory rather than on some systematically recorded and kept documents. Attrition and selectivity of my memory must have distorted them to a certain extent.

Secondly, they are also somewhat biased by my current subjective interpretations of my experience. Time, for example, may have eased the pain or lowered the excitement of some of the experience; added experience and wisdom also may have changed the lens and the vision. In many cases, it is difficult to remember exactly what I was thinking and feeling at the time those things occurred. So the descriptions and interpretations presented here are not necessarily the same as what and how I thought and felt about the events at the time they occurred. I know this partly because I have shared various parts of my learning experience (including pedagogical and other professional learning experience) with my friends, former students, and colleagues on a variety of occasions. Depending on the time, context, and audience, the perspectives as well as the emphases of my descriptions have been different. So the descriptions I put up here represent only one version or vision of the whole picture.

Moreover, translating the experience into a language different from the one by which it is originally stored in my mind inevitably leads to some distortions. This is not only because I am limited by my ability to express myself in this other language, in this case English, but also because some things are almost not possible, or at least very difficult, to be translated into another language without changing or losing some of their meanings or adding into them some connotations that were not originally there.

With these cautions in mind, I now turn to the substance of my narrative. I will start with a description of the context in which I was working. This includes some background information about the college in which I worked, the students who attended it, the program they went through, and the field experience course which I taught and which this paper focuses on. Then I will write about the process through which I learned how to teach the course, what I have learned and how I changed over the years I was involved in teaching it, and what might have influenced my learning.

Context

My description of the context may seem somewhat lengthy. Still, I consider it necessary because it matters much to the work and learning experience I am describing. Teacher education systems and programs in Taiwan and in the United States have a

different nature and many different features. Not prefaced with necessary background information, some of my later descriptions can be difficult to understand or can be easily misunderstood.

The College, the Program, and the Students

I started my work as a teacher educator in the Fall of 1983. After completing my military service obligation, I was offered the opportunity to teach in a teachers' junior college. It was a small college southeast of Taiwan with a student population of around a thousand or fewer and a faculty of fewer than a hundred. It was one of the nine teachers' junior colleges (which were all promoted to teachers' colleges equivalent to university status in 1987) that prepared the majority of elementary and kindergarten teachers in Taiwan. It was also the most isolated and remote higher education institution in the island. Any other higher education institution was more than 150 kilometers away from it.

I was pretty excited about the opportunity, partly because I always liked to work with teachers and teacher candidates, especially at the elementary school level, and partly because I had longed for opportunities to do something for the people in the relatively underdeveloped east part of the island. However, I had one important reservation on taking this job: I had no elementary school teaching experience.

I was prepared as a secondary school teacher in my undergraduate teacher education program. After I completed a year of internship[3] in a junior high school in Taipei, I proceeded to go to the master's program. Then came the military service, where I worked as a personnel officer for several months and then as an instructor in a military academy for a little more than a year. Other than my own elementary school experience and my limited contact with elementary school students through college student clubs and other voluntary community services, I had only limited knowledge about elementary school curriculum and teaching, let alone practical classroom teaching experience. Originally, I planned to take the elementary school teacher placement test and to teach in an elementary school for a few years before I went on to work in a teacher education institution.

But the invitation from the college was very strong and sincere, and the president of the college assured me that experience was not a problem and that I could get some experience later on in the college's affiliated laboratory school. After careful consideration, I finally decided to take the job because it was a work that I was (and still am) really

[3]In the teacher education system in Taiwan, it is only after teacher candidates have completed the internship year, that is, the fifth year of their undergraduate teacher education program, that they get their bachelor's degree. They may then apply for a teaching certificate from the educational administrative authority at the provincial level.

interested in. Although I felt in myself a lack of adequate knowledge and experience in the field, I also felt that I would be able to learn them on the job if I worked hard enough. After all, a significant portion of my learning experience had been like this.

The elementary school teacher education program in the college was a five-year program composed of three major components: general education, educational-professional education, and specialty-area education.[4] The first three years of the program consisted mainly of general and liberal arts courses and was generally equivalent to the senior high school level (10th-12th grades). It counted for about three fourths of the students' total credits required for graduation. The educational-professional courses, which comprised of about one sixth of the students total course credits, started in the second year of the program; but most of the courses occurred during the last two years, along with courses in the specialty-area component which students chose at the end of their third year. After completing course work in the college, each student would be assigned by the provincial and county government to an elementary school and was required to teach there as an intern teacher for a year before s/he could officially graduate and receive his/her diploma[5] and teaching certificate.

The educational-professional component of the program could be roughly categorized into three elements: educational theories or foundations, subject-specific teaching methods, and field experience. The teaching methods element included seven courses representing the major elementary school subject areas: language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, arts and crafts, music, and physical education. The field experience included a year-and-a-half field experience course sequence and a one-year internship experience; and the former is the focus of this paper.

Students were junior high school graduates when they entered the college. And it was decided in advance that one half of the students admitted to the college would be boys and the other half girls. The entrance examination was held separately for each college and was *very* competitive. Only three to five percent of the examinees would be admitted. In terms of their academic achievements, those who were admitted were generally among the best of all junior high school graduates. However, this did not mean that most of them were motivated or determined to become elementary school teachers. Many, or maybe most, of them were too young to have made such a commitment. They came to teacher education

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[4]A specialty area was either a school subject (such as language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, arts and crafts, music, and physical education) or a special category of competence or personnel the schools needed (such as school administration, guidance and counseling, and special education).

[5]The diploma they received was equivalent to the associate degree awarded by community colleges in the United States.

programs only because their parents wanted them to. So, motivation and morale was still a problem the college and the faculty had to deal with, especially in the students' later years.

All students were sponsored by the government throughout the program. No tuition was charged, and money for food, books and uniforms was provided. Students were required to live in the dormitories and eat at the dining halls during the school year.[6] In return, they were required to teach in elementary schools for at least five years before they could leave the profession. So all students knew right at the beginning that they were going to be elementary school teachers, and they would get a job if only they could manage to graduate, which should not be very difficult for them. Their prospect of being elementary school teachers and the expected roles and responsibilities of teachers were emphasized again and again in the program through classroom teaching, coursework, college-wide activities, and personal contacts between faculty and students and among students themselves.

The students were placed in classes of 40 to 50. When I first joined the college, boys and girls were generally put in separate classes. It was not until several years later that co-educational classes became the normal practice. Those who were in the same class would generally proceed as a cohort throughout the program. They took the same courses together (except the small number of electives and specialty courses that came only in the last two years), lived in neighboring rooms in the dormitories, participated and competed against other classes in many extra-curricular and college-required activities. As a result, members of a class or cohort group usually formed very strong bonds with each other.

The Field Experience Course

The field experience course was a three-semester course designed as a culminating experience for the students of teachers' colleges. It started in the second half of the students' fourth year and lasted throughout their fifth year. It carried eight credits altogether (two credits for the first semester and three each for the second and third semester), which was approximately 3 percent of the total credits students were expected to earn in the program and 17 percent of their educational-professional credits. Officially, one credit for the course meant two hours of class meeting per week, but the actual time the

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[6]For this reason, teachers' junior colleges traditionally attracted young men and women from the poor and less well-to-do families who had excellent academic achievements and were motivated to continue their education and to improve their social and economic status. Because of the economic development of the nation and the improvement of the financial situation in most families, this factor was no longer a major determinant for families and students choosing teachers' junior colleges. However, teachers' junior colleges continued to attract many outstanding students (actually their parents) into them because teaching was a stable and respected occupation with a salary a little better than other government employees at the same rank.

instructors and the students spent in the course was generally far more than that. All weekly class hours were generally arranged in one day so that there would be a longer block of time for the instructors to arrange school visits, classroom observations, and practice teaching more flexibly. One college faculty member was assigned to each class as the instructor of the course.

According to the *Teachers' Junior Colleges' Curriculum Standards* promulgated by the Ministry of Education (1978), the objectives of the course were

1. To verify educational theories and principles.
2. To understand those being educated.
3. To apprehend in practice the responsibilities of the teacher.
4. To cultivate the ideal character and manner of the teacher.
5. To master professional knowledge and competence.
6. To initiate interest and willingness to study education. (Translated from Chinese by the author)

The *Curriculum Standards* also listed a number of guiding principles for designing the content, structure, and activities of the course and for the supervision and evaluation of student performance. The content of the course was expected to include field experiences in both educational and school administration and elementary school teaching. The structure of the course should follow an "observation-participation-practice" sequence, with time appropriately distributed among each element of the course in each semester. It was also required that it connect and coordinate with the methods courses and the elementary school administration course students were required to take in the program at approximately the same period of time.

Activities of the course would include school visits, classroom observation and participation, practice teaching (including simulated teaching and teaching in the real elementary classroom), unit planning, gathering and making teaching materials, and sharing and discussion. Emphases should be put not only on the practical experiences students were expected to acquire through the course but also on the preparation, the review and examination, and the improvement of those practices and experiences. Through planning, participation, and practice, students should be given opportunities to practice, to share and discuss, to apprehend and comprehend, and to self-reflect on their experiences.

Besides weekly meetings, there were two "major events" in the course. One major event was a field trip, which took place in the middle of the second semester of the course sequence (the first semester of the students' fifth year) and lasted for 10 to 14 days. It allowed the students to travel around the island together to visit schools with different scales and different conditions located in different kinds of communities, to observe the practice of some excellent teachers in other places, and to visit other educational institutions and resources (such as museums, national parks, sites of historical relics, etc.). It was a very important activity for the students. And with some help from the college, they usually started to save money for the trip around their second year in the college (that is, more than three years before it took place!) and started to plan for it during the first semester of the field experience course. Since it was part of the instructional activities, the instructors of the course were required to travel with them on the trip, and all students must participate.

The other major event was the intensive student teaching or block experience. It generally took place during the last semester of the course (and of the students' program) and lasted for four to six weeks. During the time, the students would be teaching in a local public elementary school all day under the joint supervision of the school staff and the instructors of the course. Generally, student teachers from the same college class (thus, taught by the same field experience instructor) would be placed in the same school, and a team of two or three student teachers would be assigned to one classroom so that they could support, help, and learn from each other. In order for the student teachers to acquire experiences in teaching upper, middle, and lower grades, they would rotate the grade levels they taught every one or two weeks during the period of this block experience. Besides taking over classroom teaching responsibilities, they would also take on "student-principals" and other "student-school-administrators" roles, so that they gained some experience coordinating and managing the work of their own group as well as learning about how to assume the school's ordinary administrative functions.

Supervision and evaluation of student performance in the course was largely the responsibility of the college instructors. Cooperating staff from the schools had only a minimal role in the guidance of student teachers, and their official status in the evaluation process and decisions was only nominally acknowledged. Since no standards and process were set for selecting and training these cooperating staff and no official support and rewards were provided for them, no official responsibilities or requirements could be forced on them by the colleges or the course instructors other than that they must allow the student teachers to work in their classrooms. The coordination between the school staff and the

colleges or the course instructors remained largely as an unrecognized and ill-defined area in the *Curriculum Standards* and was operated mainly on the basis of personal relationships.

Unlike the field experience courses in most American teacher education programs, which are conducted and supervised mainly on a one-to-one basis, this field experience course was conducted and operated mainly on the basis of class groups. The instructor of the course was expected to give lectures, to conduct small group discussions, as well as to provide one-on-one consultations and supervision of 40 to 50 students at a time.

Another important difference between the programs in the United States and in Taiwan was that in Taiwan the staff who taught the field experience course would always be full-time faculty members in the college; in contrast, American teacher education programs tend to use part-time, adjunct, or junior faculty or graduate assistants to supervise student teaching and other prestudent teaching activities. This would probably make a difference concerning the faculty member's credibility in the minds of the students as well as their familiarity with the students.

Also, since the course occupied a large amount of time and attention of the students during the last two years of their study, and since the same instructor often not only taught the whole course sequence but also would be the supervisor of the students' yearlong post-course work internship, the working relationship between the instructor and the students was much longer and closer than what we can usually see in the American context.

How I Learned To Teach This Course

My first involvement in teaching the field experience course began in the second semester of my first year in the college, and I have conducted the course three times since then. I knew soon after I arrived at the college that I would need to teach this course someday because all education faculty members in the college took turns in teaching this course. And I did hope to conduct this course sometime later because I thought it was a very important part in teacher preparation and I had some interest in improving it. But I did not expect the task to come so soon.

When I was asked to teach this course for the first time, it was not because I was considered to have special expertise in this area. Rather, it was mainly based on a consideration of administrative convenience, about a month after I decided to take the job in the college. I was admitted to the doctoral program at the leading Normal University in Taiwan. I could not break the promise I made to the college, especially because it was already close to the time the students came back. In addition, I was the only new faculty

member they had hired to start a new specialty area on elementary school guidance and counseling.

So I was asked to take the job at the same time as I took courses in the doctoral program. And the president of the college promised to make necessary arrangements so that the two would not interfere with each other. Since I needed to go to my doctoral classes in Taipei (which was about 8 to 10 hours of transportation from the place I worked) at least two days a week, the Dean of Academic Affairs thought it would be easier for my teaching schedule if I taught a section of the field experience course as it was all in one day. Besides, the dean told me, I had gone through the "orthodox" teacher preparation process, so I should be fully eligible to teach the course.

I was not so sure my teacher preparation would help me much in teaching this course, though, because the program I went through was for preparing secondary school teachers. There were significant differences between the preparation of elementary and secondary teachers since the latter was prepared to teach a certain subject and to deal with adolescents and the former had to be prepared to teach all subjects and to work with younger children. Traditionally, the clinical preparation of elementary school teachers was generally considered to be better than that of secondary school teachers in Taiwan. Besides, having been a successful student in a teacher education program did not mean that I had the ability to teach a course in it. There was still a tremendous gap between being exposed to and having succeeded in a course, on the one hand, and being able to teach it, on the other.

Also, unlike some of my colleagues, who were normal school[7] graduates themselves and had several years of elementary school teaching experience, I had not taught in elementary schools before. So I knew little about present-day elementary school teaching. Although I had had two years of quite successful teaching experience in a junior high school and a military academy, it was still a different matter. Teaching teenagers is very different from teaching six-year-olds!

Lots of things which elementary school teachers need to know and to be able to do, and which my prospective students knew and were all able to do, were not in my bag of knowledge and repertoire of abilities at all. In addition, being a successful teacher is a different matter from being a successful supervisor of teaching: The former pertains to the ability to act and do, while the latter pertains to the ability to help others do and at the

[7]The normal schools were the elementary school teacher preparation institution before they were promoted to the status of teachers' junior colleges in the late 1960s.

same time learn from their doing and action. I might have been prepared to be a teacher, but I was not prepared to be a supervisor of teachers or student-teachers.

My own elementary school experience would not be very helpful either, I thought at the time. One reason was that my own experience was so long ago that supposedly many things should have changed over the years, especially because our basic education had been extended from six to nine years and the curriculum had changed altogether during the time. Another reason was that the elementary school I attended was an elite private school, whose teaching was supposedly different in significant ways from that of the public schools, given the substantial differences in their student population and school scale. So, originally I had hoped that before I got involved in teaching the field experience course, I could wait longer, observe more, and preferably get some opportunities to teach in a local elementary school for some time so that I could get a better sense and understanding of the real world of today's public elementary schools.

With significant hesitation, I still accepted the dean's request. It was partly because it would fit my schedule better anyway and partly because I knew I had to do it sooner or later, so why not get started early? After all, I was not totally ignorant about this work. I had read a few books and articles about field experience and student teaching in the United States and in some European countries when I was a master's student, especially on "microteaching" and other "laboratory experiences" as tools for improving teacher education, thus had some ideas that I might be able to try out. But most importantly, I decided to do it because I took it as a challenge to myself and thought that I might be able to learn something from doing it. I did learn something from teaching this course—a lot more than I originally dared to expect!

How I Started to Prepare for *How* I Was Going to Teach the Course

After accepting the task, I started thinking about how I would do it. I had only vague and fragmented ideas on how to conduct the course in the beginning and even fewer ideas on what would or should be included in the course. As I worked more on it, the picture gradually became clearer and the pieces came slowly together.

My thoughts and planning activities went generally into two major directions: One related to how I would conduct the course, and the other related to what I would teach in the course. The two directions was interrelated and intertwined closely in practice, but I will discuss them separately here for the purpose of clarity.

Like many teachers in the teacher-planning studies (see Clark & Peterson, 1986), my planning started from activities (that is, what activities I would have students do in and out

of the class) and processes (that is, what I would do to conduct the class activities), rather than from goals, objectives, or content. Several sources contributed to my thinking and planning.

Experience was still the most powerful teacher, I must admit, although it is not always the best. The first thing that came to my mind while I was thinking about the course was my own experience in the field experience course I took in my senior year as an undergraduate teacher candidate. It was not a particularly productive experience as I recalled and I did not learn as much as I had hoped from it. But it did give me a sense of the "basics" as well as the routines of the course, which was a very important force for making me feel safe when I was preparing for this course. It also provided a basis from which I could "go beyond" while I was doing the planning. For example, some of the important lessons I learned from the course were through mistakes my teachers had made. I was alerted to them and would try to avoid them in my teaching.

The general content and format of the course I had taken at the normal university was similar to what was prescribed for junior colleges in their *Curriculum Standards*. The course generally followed a two-week cycle: one week of observation and one week of practice teaching. Although I might not have had a clear understanding of their intentions and reasoning, I felt my instructors mainly made the necessary arrangements for our work.

During the classroom observations, we were given a one-page observational recording sheet to fill out. I cannot remember what the content of the sheet was, but I know it was very simple and mainly required our subjective opinions and comments about the teacher's teaching. We were given few instructions on how to do our observation and what we were expected to observe and to write down and were never asked specifically to relate the theories we had learned to the observation and evaluation of teaching. Also, we did not get prompt feedback after those sheets were turned in—they did not get back to us until our graduation exhibition.

The directions we got for those observation sessions were mainly managerial concerns, such as to be there on time, to dress and behave ourselves properly, not to go in and out of the classroom in the middle of the class period, to be polite and to avoid giving bad comments. It was seldom about the substance of teaching or about the teaching-learning process. Ordinarily, the instructors would organize us into small groups, according to the classrooms that were available for observation, and have each group observe a teacher for one or two class periods. After that, we would gather together and the teachers we had been watching would join us and field questions. Then the instructors would make several closing comments and the class would be dismissed.

The practice teaching activities were conducted in two different formats: One was to simulate a junior high school situation and have a group of teacher candidates (divided by our subject matter) teach a two-period lesson in one of the school subjects to their classmates (who were asked to pretend to be junior high school students during the simulation); the other was to have some groups teach their lessons in real junior high school classrooms while others observed. In both cases, the groups who did the teaching were asked to turn in a detailed lesson plan using the behavioral objectives model at least one day before the class began and to lead a discussion after they completed their practice teaching. They were also required to use audiovisual equipment and to make posters or other teaching aids in their teaching. Because of the size of our class, each group would have only one opportunity to practice teaching in each format during the year. The classmates who played students or observers were asked to fill out observation forms similar to those used for the observation sessions. The routine also ended with the instructors commenting on the groups' performances.

As I recall, their comments were often directed toward two areas: one was various specifics concerning the behaviors of each group member, such as the speed and volume of talking, the neatness of the handwriting, the way the chalkboard was used and erased, the way teaching aids were used and presented; the other area was about the lesson plans the group had turned in, especially the ways the behavioral objectives were formulated and the verbs used (However, I never really understood the concept of behavioral objectives and the rationale for using them until I started teaching my students to use them). The instructors seldom dealt with the content and structure of the lessons, probably because it was out of the realm of their expertise.

We also had a weeklong field trip and a four-week intensive student teaching. But the field trip was more like a class trip at leisure with only a few occasions of school visits than a serious learning experience. Although we spent long hours planning for the trip in class, the function of those discussions seemed to be learning how to negotiate and coordinate and to work in a group. Its other educational functions and potentials were largely neglected.

The intensive student teaching was actually quite loose, although the experience itself was really exciting: I was largely on my own. My cooperating teacher was busy preparing for her graduate school entrance examination and showed up only once (for about 20 minutes) near the end of my student teaching period in my classroom (mainly for the purpose of connecting her subsequent teaching with mine). The only comment I got from her was, "You are doing fine, so there is nothing for me to worry about." My university

instructor also came once for half a period and left without a word. Although I knew I was actually doing fine with my teaching at the time, and did appreciate their confidence in me, the kind of comment I got was certainly not very constructive or productive for my learning, and the support was not enough.

An episode during my intensive student teaching contributed to my initial knowledge about how field experience was conducted in teachers' junior colleges. The site where I was assigned to do my student teaching was an experimental school that incorporated an elementary school with a junior high school in the same campus. At the same time as we were doing our student teaching in the junior high, a class of students from the nearby teachers' junior college was doing their student teaching in the school. I happened to find out one day that a good friend of mine was in that class of elementary student teachers and was the student-principal of the week.

She invited me to their office, introduced me to the professor who led their student teaching, and showed me how they organized their personnel and prepared for and did their student teaching. I was quite impressed by what she told me at the time and found out that their experience was more organized and better structured than ours, and their learning also seemed to be richer and more solid. Although the visit was short, the memories left in my mind clearly lasted. When I started to plan for my teaching of the field experience course, this memory was very helpful: It provided me with a place where I could start to organize my thoughts about what needed to be done and how it could be structured.

Feeling that the learning opportunities in my own field experience course were limited and random, I sought other resources to enrich my learning. For example, my classmates and I arranged extra school visits by ourselves outside of the class time and invited the instructors to go with us. We also held small-group discussions outside class to discuss the concerns and opinions we were not supposed to raise in class and to make sense of the experiences we had by trying to relate them to other pieces of experience we had had before or to other theories and knowledge we had learned in other classes.

Those "active" and "voluntary" learning experiences were quite fruitful, for that was where I found a more meaningful place for field experience in the process of teacher preparation and much of its educational potential. That was also where I got interested in studying better ways of conducting field experiences, although I did not actually get into it until I was in the master's program. Also, as it came to the time when I needed to teach such a course, my dissatisfaction with the course I took tended to direct me to try something different or to do things differently, and to try to avoid repeating some mistakes I thought my teachers had made.

For example, I decided that I would try in my course to link educational theories and practical experiences more closely and more explicitly and systematically so that students would find the theories and research findings they had come across in other educational and pedagogical courses to be more meaningful and useful in their daily work and life. I would try to make classroom observations more structured so that the students would be able to understand inductively the important dimensions they need to pay attention to constantly in their teaching. I would try to make the group discussions and personal reflections after practice teaching and observation more concrete and substantial so that the students would actually be able to get some important insights and learning from them, instead of just killing their time and fulfilling a nominal obligation there.

I would also try to make lesson planning activities and the use of instructional media more purposeful and functional so that the students would be able to see the point of using them in their teaching. And I would try to give as much support and feedback as I could to my students and also encourage and actively organize them to support and help each other so that they would not feel lost and alone in the journey of our learning to teach. I would encourage my students to participate actively in the planning and implementation of the course and in the evaluation of their own learning. In addition, I would try to make the two "major events" (i.e., field trip and intensive student teaching) better structured and connected so that they could be closer to achieving their full educational potential.

The second major source that informed my thinking and planning was the experiences of my colleagues. I asked several experienced colleagues what they had done when they taught this course and what they saw as important to the course and to the students who took the course. These interviews were valuable; colleagues kindly provided many excellent ideas about what needed to be done and how it could be done. Virtually everyone I talked to had some unique perspectives and insights concerning the whats and hows of the course.

Among these ideas was a classroom observation system a colleague of mine had been developing, along with his students in and for his classes. The themes they had developed were mainly based upon the theories and research findings from educational psychology (especially the Skinnerian school) and the process-product research of teaching. These included the use of reinforcement, assessment techniques, motivational skills, questioning skills, expository presentation techniques, and techniques for eliciting and guiding student thinking. The system required the students to observe teacher behaviors and student responses in class more carefully and to record them more objectively and in more detail. The observation forms they had developed were mainly low-inference instruments because they required the observers to write down exactly what the teacher and the students said and

did, but they also asked the observers to give their opinions and evaluations of what they had seen.

The things the observers wrote down could be categorized or quantified to help them identify patterns more easily and clearly, but the raw data were mainly qualitative in nature. In each classroom observation, the instructor would ask different groups of students to focus on different dimensions of teacher-student interactions and keep concrete and specific records of their observations. Then students could combine and contrast their observations during the postobservation discussions and get a richer and more complete picture of the teacher's teaching. They could also see that no teaching is perfect and there are many different ways and dimensions a teaching event could be examined and evaluated.

My colleague encouraged me to use this system with my class and to continue improving and enriching the system. I thought at the time that these themes would provide important and research-based guidance for students during classroom visits and would lead them to be more conscious of these important dimensions of teaching behavior later on when they started their teaching practice, so I decided to introduce this system to my students and to follow my colleague's steps in developing and refining these observation instruments.

The third source of information I resorted to was books and research papers that dealt with field experience, student teaching, or the so-called clinical component of teacher education. I had started reading them since I was in the master's program and got quite interested in them. Two examples will show how the ideas I got from this source influenced my thinking and practice.

One of the most important ideas I got from reading those materials was the use of microteaching and other laboratory experiences to improve teacher candidates' specific teaching skills. Since many of our fellow teacher educators shared the feeling that student learning in teacher education programs was too broad and vague and not specific enough, we were seeking ways to change it. Microteaching thus quickly caught our attention, and I was very interested in trying it out. However, many institutional and logistic limitations forbade me (and others) from adopting its practice fully. Also, I was not so sure of exactly how to do it or whether following its formula strictly would really get what I wanted. So I just tried to incorporate some of its ideas which I saw fit into my teaching.

For example, I would use mini-units, short segments, and small groups in conducting initial practice teaching. I would ask the students to bring a tape recorder with them when they were doing simulated or real classroom teaching practice, record the whole session, play it back for themselves after class, and write analytical and reflective journals on their

performance. Combining it with the observation system we used, I would ask other students to observe their classmates' teaching in various dimensions and to give systematic feedback to them. Videotaping and playback was also used occasionally.

Another important idea that struck me was the idea of "clinical professorship," which was strongly promoted by one of the presidents of teachers' junior colleges at the time. According to the literature I read, there were two ways in which the idea of clinical professor was implemented: One was to have teacher educators who taught methods courses or who supervised field experiences teach some classes in the schools to get firsthand and up-to-date experience in school teaching; the other was to have elementary and secondary school teachers come to teacher preparation institutions to teach or coteach methods or field experience courses.

Inspired by this, I contacted the college's affiliated laboratory elementary school to seek whether there was any possibility for me to teach some classes there. The response I got was quite interesting. I was told officially and publicly that if I wanted to do so, they would surely help, but the teacher in charge of this matter also told me privately that they did not really welcome such work. There were several reasons for their reservation.

The administrative trouble it would cause was certainly one of them. But the most interesting reason they gave was that, according to the research findings reported by the other teachers' junior college which was experimenting with the idea, average student achievements in specific subjects taught by college professors were almost unanimously significantly lower than those taught by the regular teachers; their concern was that if this happened, it would be difficult for them to face parent pressures. I had no basis to assure them (and myself) that this would not happen, so the idea was given up—but not entirely. The way I planned to do it was to coplan and/or coteach a lesson with some of my students occasionally while they were doing their practice teaching. Later, I found that we both seemed to like this practice and we were both learning at the same time.

I also tried to invite local elementary school teachers to team-teach the course with me, but again I faced some administrative difficulties. Aside from time conflicts most school teachers would have to face, one of the major obstacles was that they were not qualified to teach college courses, so the college could not pay them for their work. I certainly could not ask them to sacrifice so much time and energy to do free work for me (and my students), so the idea was also put away. But occasionally, I would still invite some very good teachers to my classes or we would go to their schools to observe them and talk to them.

Other important ideas that informed my thinking and planning were clinical supervision, peer supervision, and interactions analysis. Later, some concepts concerning lifelong and career-long learning, teacher development and socialization, competency/ performance-based teacher education, and the humanistic or personalistic approaches to teacher education also got my attention and influenced my perspectives on what should be included in preservice field experience course and why and how we should do so.

From the above descriptions, one may get the impression that the literature I went through was all from Western sources. This was not true. At that time, I conducted a quite extensive search of resources that were written in Chinese and available in Taiwan. They included textbooks used in field experience courses at various time, articles published in various journals on related issues and topics, and related research papers that appeared on scholarly journals in the education profession. What I found was surprising and sad to me. First, I found that aside from a handful of surveys of opinions, virtually no empirical study was done on issues regarding the effects of field experiences on teachers or student teachers in Taiwan in the past 40 years. A large proportion of the articles published in educational journals were either introducing ideas or approaches from the Western world (mainly the United States) or translations of English originals. Most others were opinion papers, working reports, or anecdotes and episodes of personal teaching experiences. Also, I found that the textbooks or handbooks published for field experience courses were shockingly similar in their content and structure over a period of more than 30 years. Most of the books gave lengthy descriptions of procedures about how to organize students for student teaching, school and classroom visits, and other field experiences. It seemed as if they were written as instructor's manuals for those who would teach the course, not for the students in the course to read and use. In terms of the contents and methods of teaching, much of the advice consisted of somewhat trivial skills, techniques, reminders, and tips for dealing with special or specific problems.

Most of the content seemed to be based on traditional wisdom or experience rather than on grounded and valid theories and research findings, and they were presented in an expository, rather than thought-provoking, manner. Very little dealt directly with, or was supported by, theories and empirical evidence; and none of the books gave activities for the student readers to exercise their professional judgments or to polish their problem-solving abilities. In all, it seemed that there was a strong atheoretical tendency in people's minds when they thought about field experiences in teacher education. This seemed to be consistent with the doubt many people had about the usefulness and usableness of educational theories. But it was really sad that teacher educators themselves had also been

holding this view and even reinforcing this view through their practice! This kind of thoughts and feelings also drove me to try to make some changes in the way I conduct the course.

The fourth source that influenced my thinking and planning strongly but more implicitly at the time was my personal background, beliefs, and characteristics. For example, my experience in guidance and counseling led me to use more small-group discussions and to pay more attention and to give more flexibility to the needs of individual students in my teaching. The care and affection I received from my teachers during my school years also gave me the power and force to show affection and care for my students and led me to emphasize its importance in teaching and teacher education. As a shy and quiet student in the classroom myself, I was more sensitive to the "forgotten majority" who were not explicitly responding or presenting in class but nonetheless were actively participating and learning in their own ways. My teaching experiences with the low academic achievers, the slow learners, the unmotivated, the emotionally disturbed, and the delinquents in the junior high school, military academy, summer camps, and counseling groups made me believe that the potential and possibility of positive learning and willingness to learn within each and every individual, even the most difficult ones, were immense and that the teacher-student relationship was the key foundation for successful teaching and learning. My personal appreciation of the theory, philosophy, and personal qualities of Carl Rogers also influenced strongly the way I thought about my students and the way I related myself to them. It also made me more inclined to emphasize the role of the teacher as a person and a fellow person in teaching, instead of emphasizing the technical skills of teaching.

A more complete example may make these implicit influences and their interactions more clear. One thing I remembered very well from my sociology of education course was Waller's (1932/1967) contention that teachers and students were made opponents by their respective roles in the context of teaching and were constantly competing against each other; if teaching was going to work, the teacher must win.[8] I did not totally agree with what he argued and I believed that teachers and students could be partners and should always consider themselves as "in the same boat." So I took his argument and transformed it a little to construct a new argument. The way I put it was that teachers and students were indeed competing or even battling against each other in some cases, and it was true that in order for the teaching function to be achieved, teachers must win; however, the way teachers won was not by knocking students down and making students losers through exercising the

[8]This was not exactly what Waller said in his book but was my interpretation of his argument.

teachers' power and authority but, instead, by winning the students over to the teachers' side and creating a "win-win" situation (Gordon, 1974) through the teachers' affection and care for the students and the construction of common goals and visions of learning. My working experiences with many "difficult" students at various settings had proved to me that this could be done most of the time.

So in conducting this course, I would invite students to coplan the content of the course with me. I would ask them to tell me what they expected to learn in the course and what they thought should be included in the course. Then I would also add things that I saw as important for them to learn in the course. After extensive discussion in our first week's class, they would have the final say as to what should be included in the course and in what order. Some of my colleagues disagreed with my speculation and thought it would be extremely risky because "the students tended to be lazy and would pick the least amount of work and the easiest way of doing it," they said. However, I persisted to try it with my first class of boys, which was characterized as unmotivated and very lazy by most of my colleagues.

As it turned out, their participation in the discussion and the decisions they made even exceeded my expectations. They made many really valuable suggestions, and we found that there were many things that needed to be learned and that there were many interesting themes and topics that we wanted to explore together. When decisions were needed, the fight was not over things that I wanted to include—and they did not—but over how not to include so many things in the syllabus in order to make our schedule reasonable and workable and over which ones were more important and urgent than others. And just as I had done in my undergraduate years, they requested and finally arranged extra time and opportunities for learning outside of the scheduled class time and college calendar. Based on this positive experience, I used these joint-planning activities again in subsequent terms and with the other two field experience classes I taught later, and the results were nearly the same; that is, the students asked for more things to learn and more work to do than I ever dared to require them to if I had been planning the course myself, and they felt more responsible in learning and doing them. One thing I have learned in this experience is that given appropriate facilitation, guidance, and respect, students can be trusted to participate in designing and deciding the courses and substance of their own learning.

With the learning I acquired from these four sources, I got a clearer picture and more concrete ideas about how I would teach this course. But the question about what should be taught in the course still remained to be explored.

How I Started to Prepare for *What* I Was Going to Teach in the Course

There were also several sources that influenced my thinking and preparation of the content and substance of the course. Many of them were similar to the ones mentioned above but the way they informed my planning and the way I think about them were different.

When I started preparing for the content of the course, I first went to the official requirements of the course, which were defined and regulated in the *Curriculum Standards* and other related documents. These sources of information were helpful only to a limited extent. The goals and guidelines prescribed in the *Curriculum Standards* were broad and general and they dealt more with the activities and the procedure of conducting the course than with the substance to be taught. Actually, the goal statements were so general (and vague) that they almost made no sense to me at the time when I first read them and taught the course. It was not until several years later when I was constructing a paper analyzing the evolution of the field experience course in Chinese teacher education that I started to make sense of them.

I learned from the *Curriculum Standards* and other official documents the general formats and procedural requirements that the course must follow, such as, besides general orientation activities, engaging the teacher candidates in observation, participation, practice-teaching and lesson planning in the course. We needed to work on improving and enhancing teacher candidates' knowledge, skills, attitudes, orientations, personal characters, as well as their morale and professional commitments. The activities needed to cover both teaching practice and practice of administrative work in schools; and, in terms of teaching practice, teacher candidates needed to have opportunities to work on teaching all subjects and at all grade levels. But as far as the specific topics or themes to be covered, concepts and skills to be developed, and the content or substance of the experience students are expected to have in the course, other sources had to be sought.

Another important source concerning the official requirements for the course was a set of documents and articles on Competency/Performance-Based Teacher Education (C/PBTE), which were generated due to the strong endorsement and advocacy the of director of the provincial government's Department of Education. Each teachers' junior college was charged with the mission of experimenting with incorporating the C/PBTE concepts in one way or another in its program and instructional practice. Although I was quite impressed by many of its concepts, I had strong reservations about the way competency was conceptualized (as specific, and sometimes trivial, skills) and the way it was implemented by the government. Besides, the resources and support we could acquire for

incorporating its ideas in our teaching were scarce. As a result, C/PBTE was studied, but the mark it left on my practice was rather limited.

A more salient source of information that helped me define and frame the content of the course was the general expectations of the responsibilities of the elementary school teacher and the public images of the good or ideal elementary school teacher. The understanding I had was a blend of the literature in the psychology and sociology of teaching and teachers,[9] my personal thinking, beliefs and experiences, as well as talking to many elementary school teachers and administrators, local educational administrators, and my colleagues and students. Some interesting understandings I got from these sources concerning the expectations toward ideal elementary school teachers included the following:

1. The general responsibilities of elementary school teachers include teaching, student guidance, school administration, research, and public (community) service, among which teaching is the core. Teachers are expected to have at least some competence and proficiency in carrying out responsibilities in all these categories.

2. Teachers need to be able to teach all subjects at any grade level in the elementary school. However, since the curriculum and textbooks are mandated by the central government and the schedules of progression are regulated by the local government with little flexibility, the concerns are focused not so much on the teachers' knowledge and skills in teaching the subject or the way they represent and transform the subject matter to the students as on whether they "have done their job" by covering all the contents provided in the textbooks and catching up with the progression schedules.

3. Besides teaching subject matter in classrooms, teachers needs to be able to lead a class and carry out a variety of duties related to being a homeroom teacher (especially maintaining order and completing various administrative forms on time). They also need to be able to organize or facilitate a variety of extracurricular or cocurricular activities and carry out many schoolwide duties when being asked to. Interestingly, these abilities were most emphasized by school administrators but were not valued highly by either teachers or teacher educators.

4. Aside from the knowledge and skills in teaching, teachers are expected to be role models for their students in all respects and at all times. Therefore, their manners and behavior, their personal character and morality, their lifestyle, and even the way they dress and manage their appearance, whether in or outside of the school, are all viewed as important dimensions in judging their suitableness and adequacy for their work as a teacher.

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[9] I am unable to cite the studies on which my conception was based because I do not have them with me now.

5. More than anything else, teachers are expected to show deep and long-term commitments to the work of teaching and the career as a teacher. The so called "professional spirit" was the most often emphasized topic both within the educational professional community and in lay discussions on teacher qualities. And formal teacher education programs are expected to be responsible for cultivating this kind of professional spirit in their students, and this is considered the most important reason why teachers need to come exclusively from the teacher education system and why teacher education institutions need to be kept separate from other general and professional education institutions. In other words, if teacher education should lose its ground, it will not be because it fails to prepare teachers with adequate knowledge and skills in teaching, but because it fails to cultivate this commitment in them.

Given these understandings and the fact that field experience was considered a culminating experience in teacher preparation, major tasks of the course needed to include not only helping students gain insights and experience in teaching all subjects at all grade levels but also in carrying out other aspects of teacher's work. And more importantly, the course needed to help its students develop deep commitment to teaching as well as their other personal qualities and moral characters.

Having decided where we needed to go, I continued my planning by considering where the students were, what they had gone through, and what they might want or need. It seemed that the differences between where they needed to go and wanted to be and where they were and had been were the places where we needed to work on in this course. I tried to get some understanding of the latter in several ways.

First, I looked at the courses they had taken, were taking, and would be taking in the program in order to map out the relations of these courses with each other and with the field experience course. The major purpose of doing this was to look for a basis for the course to rest on or draw on and to avoid redundancy in the content. Besides looking at the titles of the courses, I also talked to some of the faculty who had taught those courses and skimmed through the textbooks they had used in those courses. From this analysis it seemed that (1) the students had already had a number of educational theories and foundations courses, so it should not be difficult for us to relate to these theoretical frameworks when looking at the experience we would acquire in this course; (2) I did not have to worry too much about the subject-specific content and pedagogy in this course because these matters either had been or would be taken care of in other courses in the students' program; and (3) the students had only very limited direct contact with elementary schools and their students and had had few, if any, classroom teaching experiences, even in

small segments, when they entered the course. So I assumed that what I needed to concentrate on in this course was to help the students gain practical experiences in all subjects at all grades and link their experiences to the substantive knowledge and theoretical constructs they had acquired in other courses.

However, my assumption was later proven to be quite inaccurate, if not totally wrong. What I found during teaching was that most students were rather weak in making these connections. The concepts, theories, and content-specific pedagogies they were assumed to have learned by then were seldom there. They either had not learned them at all or had not really understood them ever, or had forgotten all about them, or had only vague impressions left. For the ones they did remember, they were either too abstract (i.e., they could formally define or recite them but were unable to give any specific example in actual use), or too rigid (i.e., they knew them as a set of theory or conceptual framework but were unable to relate them to real life situations). For example, according to my calculation, students would come across Piaget's theory of intellectual development in at least 13 different courses in the program, and most students could easily name the four stages of a child's intellectual development in correct order; however, when they were asked to use this theoretical construct to observe a child's performance in cognitive task situations, only a handful of students in the three classes I had taught were able to do that. Also, reinforcement and conditioning was a big topic in their educational psychology course as well as other teaching methods courses; however, when we were discussing and constructing an observational form on teachers' use of reinforcement in classroom teaching, I found that very few of them were clear about the distinctions between negative reinforcement and extinction or between negative reinforcement and punishment.

The teaching of Chinese phonetic symbols can be given as an example of a problem in content-specific pedagogy. The symbols are taught in the first 10 weeks of the first grade, before students begin to learn Chinese characters in the curriculum. There are two major approaches to teach these symbols: The traditional approach starts with each individual symbol in a fixed sequence and then combines the symbols to pronounce the words (which, I think, is similar to the phonics approach in teaching English alphabets and words). The approach that is used in the elementary school textbook nowadays and is taught in the language arts methods course is a cognitive approach, which starts with the words in their spelled forms and then analyzes the components from the words. Although all students in my classes knew that, very few of them really understood the difference between the two approaches and the rationale behind each of them. Moreover, only a minority of them could use the current approach successfully and adequately in real or simulated teaching

situations. These problems I learned about later made me rethink and refocus my teaching a lot.

Another thing I did in trying to understand the students' entering knowledge and behavior was to have them fill out a self-evaluation checklist. The list was taken from a study (and the only one) on basic competencies for elementary school teachers in Taiwan (Taiwan Provincial Institute for the Continuing Education of Elementary School Teachers, 1976). It listed 484 specific competencies, in four major categories, that educators and the general public thought elementary school teachers needed to have. I transformed the list into a self-evaluation form and had the students all fill it out before the semester started.

The purpose for using this checklist was more than helping me understand the students. It was also trying to help them understand themselves (especially in terms of what they needed or were expected to have and to learn), to help set their mental orientation to learn, as well as to contribute to our first discussion on what needed to be included in the course. Although the original purpose emphasized the former rather than the latter, the actual contribution it made on my teaching was the reverse. The students found in the list a great deal of knowledge and skills they either lacked, or had not been well prepared for, and were more strongly motivated to learn in the field experience course and in the remaining time they had before graduation. The goals of their learning also became clearer. But, although I originally planned to have the students reevaluate themselves on the list every semester to monitor their progress and to set new goals for the next semester, the plan was abandoned because it was too time-consuming to go through the whole list again and again.

The third thing I did in learning about my students and planning the content of the course was to ask the students to name the things they wanted and were expecting to learn in this course the first time we met as a group. This was more than a strategy I used to elicit student interest and participation, it was my genuine effort to understand what they were expecting from the course because I was not sure at all whether I had it right or not.

The class was quiet at first, probably because the students did not expect this kind of question to come and because they had never done this before. They were accustomed to being "fed" and to "taking advice" and had no experience being asked by a teacher for advice in course content and format. Probably they were also unsure about whether I "really meant it" or not. So I used brainstorming and started to throw out some of my doubts and tentative thoughts on what the course was going to be about. The students gradually got interested and involved and started to throw out their ideas and reasoning. Different needs

and opinions emerged, and we discussed and debated about different possibilities and alternatives quite extensively before the decisions were made.

Not surprisingly, our agendas did not match very well at first. Given their knowledge and expectation about the course, they were more anxious to "test the water," and focused mainly on what practical experiences they could get in the activities of the course. They hoped to have opportunities to observe and practice teaching in all subjects and to learn the various "tricks" of achieving interesting and exciting but smooth and orderly teaching. They were not very satisfied with what they had learned up to that point and were hoping that experiences in the real world would "actually teach them something usable and useful." And although some of them did not really want to become teachers, they still wanted to learn more about elementary school teaching because they had to teach for at least five years after they graduated. So learning better about teaching would give themselves a better time on the job.

In contrast, recently trained in the graduate school on theories and research without much practical experience (especially in elementary schools), I was more interested in applying the theories and research findings in practice. I had just started to learn about process-product research on teaching and was very excited about its achievements and potential. My conception at the time was that teaching was more a behavioral science than an art. Fortunately, although our thinking did not go into the same direction, we were able to listen to each other. And after listening to my reasons for incorporating more theoretical points and research-based knowledge into the course content, they were attracted by the possibilities these theories and research could provide.

It was really a very productive discussion and was very helpful too. Besides the substantive points we reached on the content and format of the course, a mutual respect was developed in the process. I found that most of them were actually not "lazy" as others had described. They were still eager to learn, but they wanted to learn in ways they could make sense. They also wanted to be treated as "responsible adults" who were able to manage their own learning. This knowledge inspired me to treat them as more than students in a traditional sense but also as partners in learning. Later, I went even further to treat them in part as my "colleagues" because I figured it was important that they learn to develop a "teacher self" (not just a student self) in them and start to learn to develop a collegial relationship with their peer teachers, which they were about to face in the near future.

In the process and through the activities of planning for the format and content of the course, I have learned a great deal both in terms of getting new concepts, information and skills, as well as of systemizing and making explicit existing concepts, beliefs, and

polishing previously learned abilities and skills. The range is also pretty wide, including not only learning about the substance of the course and how to teach it but also learning about the students, the contexts, the program, and many other supporting or influencing factors. However, my knowledge did not stop with the planning of the course. I continued to learn in the process of teaching the course.

How My Learning Progressed While I Was Teaching the Course

In addition to my significant learning about my students and what they wanted and needed from the course (as well as how to work with them) during the first class meetings, there are many other aspects that I learned about later through teaching this course.

One major aspect of my learning was that through teaching this course, I developed a deeper and more comprehensive understanding about elementary school children and their education. As I have mentioned earlier, I had no elementary teaching experience myself and had only limited contact with elementary school children through summer camps and volunteer service activities. So I was learning, along with my students, about the things we arranged together for them to learn. And I was genuinely interested, which I think may have had a bearing on the students' high level of interest and participation. For example, because I had to help my students with their lesson planning, I needed to be familiar with the elementary school curriculum and textbooks. This gave me a reason and motivation to read the curriculum standards and the textbooks extensively and intensively to get a better grasp of them. This effort was quite labor-intensive and time-consuming, but it proved to be very helpful not only for my teaching in this course but also for my general professional role and responsibility and my other work related to elementary education.

Teaching this course also gave me abundant opportunities to observe elementary school children and how they interacted with their teachers both in and outside of their classrooms. This happened when I accompanied my students to visit schools and classrooms and to observe experienced teachers' practice. It also happened when I observed my students doing their mini-unit practice teaching and extended student teaching. Moreover, I was able to work extensively with elementary school children on these occasions. This happened when I modeled interviewing and clinical assessment techniques for my students and helped them with their assignments on interviewing, assessing, and counseling students. This also happened when I was in my students' classrooms observing and helping with their teaching.

At first, I got myself involved in directly working with children only because I could not help it: I wanted to learn to work with children myself and I was curious about and

interested in their work. Later, I found that working directly with the children was a helpful vehicle for enhancing the quality of my work with my students: We would have concrete material to talk about; I could give more specific examples and suggestions with regard to their actions and interactions with "real" students; we would be involved in genuine exchange of information on people we both knew and cared about; and my students would have chances to observe me working with children and to question my thoughts and theories in context and in practice. After seeing the benefits of such work, it became a regular habit of mine to involve myself in working directly with children when I supervised field experiences. And the children have become an important source of my learning too.

A second major aspect of my learning related to the enhancement of my knowledge and understanding of teaching and learning themselves. Having to guide my students in learning to teach, to explain to them what was problematic about their teaching and why certain strategies were better than others, and to persuade them that certain changes and adjustments were necessary in their teaching forced me constantly to pursue and update my knowledge and skills in teaching and learning and to clarify for myself many points I had not noticed or thought through before. These exercises expanded and enhanced my understanding about the teaching and learning process and practice. They deepened my inquiry into the assumptions different teaching models and strategies were based upon and the implications they might entail. And they also gave me opportunities to improvise and then try out solutions or strategies to deal with various instructional and learning problems. An example of this was my renewed understanding of behavioral objectives and the meaning of Bloom's taxonomy of learning objectives. This experience of learning to teach and to learn through teaching led me to value more highly student participation and active involvement in the teaching and learning process and to urge my students to develop strategies that help their students learn the content to the extent that they can teach it to others.

A third aspect of my learning was related to teacher education, teacher learning, and the meaning and place of field experience in teacher learning and education. For example, since this course was considered the culminating and most integrated learning experience in preservice teacher education programs, the instructors of this course were often considered to be responsible for controlling the quality of the "final products" of the programs. This led me to consider in more comprehensive terms what beginning teachers should have learned when they came out of the teacher preparation program, what they needed to learn when they were in the program, and what could or needed to be learned on the job. It also led me to go beyond the one course I taught and to think harder about

how to connect this course to all other courses and experiences teacher candidates had in the teacher preparation institutions. And since the approach through which teacher candidates learn in this course (mainly experiential or first-hand learning) was significantly different from most other courses they had had in the program and in previous schooling (mainly through substitute, second-hand experience), it became an important task for the instructor of this course to help the students adjust to this different mode of learning. Although students have had abundant opportunities learning from experience, those learning usually happened naturally in informal situations. So most of the students were not familiar with, and some of them felt quite uncomfortable with, encountering this kind of learning in formal coursework. This was something I did not expect to encounter before I actually met with it while I was teaching the course.

The fourth aspect of my learning had to do with teaching of the course itself. At first, ideas about what to do and how to do it in the course were discrete and disperse. They were neither well connected nor organized. And most of my ideas stayed at the level of separate "activities" without further considerations of issues like why these activities were considered helpful, in what ways and under what conditions they were helpful, how one activity connected with another, and their place in the whole curriculum.

Actually, the whole picture of the curriculum did not exist at all at the time. All these further and more sophisticated considerations entered into my mind only during or after I tried them and/or discussed them with my students and colleagues. And a more coherent picture of the content and format of the course came only at the end of my third time teaching the course, when I was asked to make a presentation at an intercollegiate conference on instructional design and development what we had tried out in the course and what we had learned from those experiences. Only at that time when I was forced to put our experience in a more systematic way was I able to see and to appreciate how much I (we) had learned in, from, and through teaching the course.

Finally, in teaching this course, I also learned something about how to bring about instructional changes in a small institution, strategically. The way I planned to teach the course was in many respects different from the traditional way it was taught. Some of the changes were mainly adjustment of instructional content and procedures in class and thus was pretty much under my discretion. Some of the changes I intended to make were at odds with the existing college policies or taken-for-granted administrative routines, and thus were more complicated and problematic.

Since I was new to the college and also new in teaching this course, I did not have much knowledge about its traditions or routines. I was also very idealistic and naive about

how to deal with the bureaucratic system skillfully. So some of the changes I proposed or implemented caused much friction between me and the directors of field experiences. They were angry about my making decisions and changes sometimes incompatible with college policies on my own. And I thought I had sound rationale for doing so and would argue vigorously for the educational benefits and reasonableness of my decisions. I also thought that their rigidity and unreflecting attitudes were absurd and unreasonable. During the first year I taught this course there were several major confrontations between me and the two directors in public and in private.

As my experience accumulated, I gradually learned that this was not a helpful way to initiate change in an institution since it tended to create barriers and enhance resistance. And as I began to know the organizational culture better, I learned more ways of working "around" the formal rules and regulations and made "silent" changes before those rules could be changed. I learned to approach issues and problems in a low-keyed fashion and was more willing (and more able) to explain things clearly and negotiate with others. I would first make some changes within the limits I was allowed to make or maybe push the limit only a little bit more but stay within the range that the administrators could tolerate. And I would deliberately avoid emphasizing any aspect of significant change until positive results or responses were out. After these changes were accepted and the results were considered positive, my credibility on this matter would increase. Then bolder changes I proposed would be more easily accepted or at least considered seriously.

I also learned to always prepare sound and well-developed arguments and solid evidence on any change I proposed to make, and I communicated them privately with the key persons, keeping them informed of its meanings and persuading them of the benefits, before presenting it in public occasions. Moreover, I actively sought to communicate my ideas to my colleagues both in the college and in the cooperating schools and to collaborate with them in teaching the course. As a result, the tension was significantly lowered, and within six years, the way most faculty conducted this course was significantly changed. By the time I left for Michigan State University, the new models I developed with my colleagues and students had started to influence the practice of faculty in other teachers' colleges.

The aspects of learning discussed above were influenced by the following major forces. One of the most important influences came from my students. Besides my significant learning *with* my students, I also learned a great deal *from* them. For example, in our regular postobservation discussions, in our numerous exchanges of ideas in weekly journals, in the questions the raised in and outside of the classes in response to my

presentations or concerning their own doubts and problems, and in the comments they made about my teaching, I saw and thought of a lot of things I had not seen or thought of before and would not be able to see or think of otherwise. Our exchange of thoughts and ideas sometimes continued after they graduated from the college. In these cases, the needs, thoughts, problems, and experiences of these new teachers were very informative in helping me and my later students in rethinking and reshaping the objectives, foci, formats and activities of the course. Since I started teaching the course, my students and previous students had been an important source of my learning.

Another major influence came from my colleagues. There were two major ways I learned from them. One was through constantly communicating and exchanging ideas with each other and getting feedback from others. The other was collaborating with them in teaching the course. The year I started teaching this course, three out of four instructors assigned to the course were teaching it for the first time. Not knowing exactly what to do in the course, we naturally shared ideas and supported each other. Two interesting factors brought us closer together.

One factor was that two of our classes would have to go on the two-week field trip together, according to the college tradition. Since our students would have to work closely together in coordinating their itinerary and to experience common learning in that "major event," it made a great deal of sense for us to coordinate our teaching more. A particular incident enabled the third new instructor and me to work closer more closely together. One night in the first semester that I taught the course, I happened to pass by the classroom of this third instructor's class and found two students from my class on the podium explaining what they had learned in our class about classroom observation to her and to the students in her class. My students called me in to answer some questions they could not answer. They told me that the students in that class heard about our learning through a student whose boyfriend was in our class and was quite impressed by it. So with the permission of their instructor, they invited my students to tell them about it. The instructor was moved by her students' enthusiasm and was interested in our effort too, so she also joined us later and shared her insights with us.

The coordination and collaboration sort of happened naturally the first time I taught the course, but because of its success, the second and third time I taught, I did it deliberately. And the level of our collaboration enhanced each time too. During my third time teaching this course, the three instructors who taught it that year actually brought all three classes of students together to plan for a common learning experience and team-taught for the whole time. What was particularly interesting about that team was all three of us

held different perspectives about teaching (as science, as practical art, as fine art) as well as different expertise in subject matter areas (one in music and science; one in arts and crafts, educational media, and physical education; and one in social studies, and two of us shared expertise in language arts, math, and moral education), and yet we were able to understand each other's perspective and respect each other's work and expertise. As a result, students were excited that they could get a more balanced and solid preparation in subject matter-specific teaching and learning and be exposed to different views and arguments about the nature of teaching in a mutually respected manner. And we learned a great deal from each other through planning and teaching together too.

Third, I learned through formal scholarship in the related areas. This included reviewing various research literature and attending various workshops and conferences. The content of these areas covered general pedagogy and theories of teaching and learning, content-specific learning and pedagogy, and field experience and student teaching. The knowledge and learning I obtained from these scholarly works informed my practice, and the enactment of these scholarly works in my teaching, enhanced my understanding of such knowledge and skills.

Fourth, I learned through observing many educators at work, including novice and experienced educators. And they also included excellent and not-so-good educators. No matter what kind of educators they were, there was a great deal to be learned from them. For example, the problems and ineptness of novices informed what we needed to improve in preservice education; the problematic beliefs and practice of the not-so-good educators reminded us of something we needed to alert ourselves to and to avoid; while the artfulness, skillfulness, and adeptness of experienced and excellent educators gave us guideposts to strive for.

I can still remember clearly how we were all moved by the philosophy of a retiring model teacher who devoted his whole life and career to science education and established in every school he had taught a miniscale museum, a zoo, an aquarium, and an arboretum. I also remember the enthusiasm we felt strongly for a teacher in a small remote school who taught his academically less-motivated and -prepared students to love poems and to write and publish their own beautiful poems. I can also remember how furious we were when we came across a teacher who did not prepare his lesson well and who gave his students biased and misleading information unrelated in any way to the content he was expected to teach. These examples all left significant marks of learning not only on the minds of my students but also on me.

And finally, I learned a great deal by experiencing teaching and through knowing and reflection on my work. The process of planning and teaching the course itself was a learning process. I was able to enact a significant part of the knowledge and skills I had learned earlier in my life and study. I was also able to try out many of my ideas and ideals in and about teaching and about educating teachers in this course. And I was able to relate closely to teacher candidates, to understand their needs and interests as well as how to help them learn to teach in exciting and challenging ways. In addition, my learning was enhanced as I encountered and tried to figure out how to solve some expected or unexpected problems in class, strived to provide assistance to a student question which I either did not know or had not thought of or thought through before, and as I reflect on the efforts I had made in teaching the course.

Summary

Although this is only a small segment of my personal pedagogical learning history, it is important because it included some most meaningful and most memorable learning experience I have ever had. The effort to reflect on these experiences has been very labor-intensive and time-consuming for me, but it is also very exciting and helpful too. It not only allows me to organize and bring to life again some very important pieces of my thoughts and experience, and to share them for an audience, but also helps me to add new understanding to the old experience and to regain my voice in thinking and discussing issues, concepts, and ideas in this area.

Moreover, learning from this experience is still going on even though I have stopped teaching this course. New meanings come each time I reflect on this experience and relate it to some piece of new learning and experience I have had more recently. And I expect that I will continue to learn from it in the future.

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